

Building Recording Studios Whilst Bradford Burned: DiY Punk Ethics in a Field of Force

by Alastair Gordon

"This is a chord, this is another, this is a third, now form a band!"
(Savage, 1991: 281).

Studio 1in12: The Field of Force

I occupy two distinct roles: one as a long-term punk rock scene participant and the second as an academic principally interested in the cultural legacy of UK 1970s punk. Both of these areas of investigation have been central aspects of my life for the last three decades. The undertaking of ethnographic research in this arena has often led to accusations made to me by participants of 'selling out' and undermining the integrity of the scene, not to mention residual feelings of compromise. To begin, some biographical/contextual information is required.

Long before I became a doctoral student in 2000, I made my first visit to the anarchist punk venue the Bradford 1in12 Club during the summer of 1990. I was travelling with two Nottingham hardcore punk bands, Kings of Oblivion and Forcefed to play a one-day festival at the recently opened building. Also on the bill were two 'ex' member bands from the UK anarcho punk subculture, Zygote and Kulturo with respective members of Amebix and Antisect. I remember my anticipation and excitement at the prospect of seeing these bands as I'd been supporter of their nineteen eighties incarnations.

More importantly this was my first visit to the Club. This place was already steeped in punk folklore. It was housed in an old building and worked according to anarchist principles of mutual aid. I was impressed to see the punk ethic of Do-it-Yourself (hereafter DiY) intertwined with anarcho syndicalist politics to create a space free of corporate control, hierarchical management structures and taking a proud place in a long history of English anarchist resistance cultures.¹ Trawling around the building was an adventure; a venue, a bar floor, a cafe replete with a full-sized snooker table, and the place was full of punks. This place was clearly organised from the grass roots of the Bradford punk scene and meant business. After a great show and the chance to network with people involved in the club, I maintained frequent visits from 1994 onwards, playing with various bands and eventually renting practice room space for my band from 1997. By then however, I was approaching success in procuring a scholarship to undertake ethnographic research on DiY punk cultures.

The background of the underlying philosophy of punk is complicated but in terms of providing some contextual information, punk arrived onto the UK cultural landscape in late 1976 rendering visible through its ~~do-it-yourself~~ [DiY](#) philosophy the previously mystified mechanics of music participation, consumption and participation. Punk illuminated UK cultural inequality and economic problems via its musical rallying call whilst offering an opportunity for disenfranchised people to make their voices heard without resorting to the major label music business. The legacy of those now historical events of the Sex Pistols *et al* is constitutive of what is now broadly described as 'early' punk and well documented in both academic and populist terms. What is, however, broadly absent from these accounts—mostly concentrated upon clothing style, musicology, aesthetics etc.—has been detailed consideration of the daily, *ethical* legacy as the core motor for UK grassroots punk cultural activity. This has been summarised in the term: do it yourself, which serves to *demystify* previous processes of music production, throwing access open to newcomers, empowered by the de-fetishised punk ethic.²

In what follows I address this oversight via examination of ethnographic fieldwork data detailing the reflexive, contextual constraints and rewards that operate in DiY punk as a motor for creative action against mainstream music production.³ Intertwined with this account are the tangential yet important issues of undertaking critical insider ethnography in the punk scene. This method is precariously bound up with a number of contextual scene/network power relations that inform wider, associate issues of ethnographic writing and methodological procedure.

To explore the historical legacy of DiY punk and the difficult position of undertaking fieldwork in one's own culture, this article has two principal aims. Firstly it will illustrate how a thirty-odd year legacy of DiY has crystallised in everyday political punk practice in the UK. Here I will discuss aspects of my ethnographic research undertaken whilst building a band-collectively-owned recording studio during the summer of 2001. I will argue that DiY ethics operate within the framework of where the lack of immediate contextual practical resources that were both a continually frustrating yet equally rewarding as an part of both the endeavour and the realisation of collective projects once a project has been realised. This is one aspect of DiY culture that has transferable potential for any researcher seeking to examine this ethical legacy in commensurate fields for example hip-hop or political activism.⁴ The initial, 1970s romantic descriptions offered below of DiY as 'effortless' and 'immediate' do not resemble the difficult, repetitive struggles evident in the realisation of the DiY project outlined in this article. Indeed, this is not an article-essay that portrays DiY culture as a naïve impersonation of mainstream music culture, in spite of contrary to Henry Jenkins' (1992) interpretation of de Certeau, in which he suggests 'a (1984) theory of everyday life that such creative everyday practice is akin to effortless "textual poaching" (1984: 176; Jenkins: 1992:24; Bennett, 2009).'⁵ By contrast, DiY production is far more taxing, independent and implicitly critical in practice than such accounts would imply. The reality of DiY encountered in this research is that of uneven endeavour, and one which has its fair share of hardship and struggle factored into the task; though one should not also forget that the fun and satisfaction of involvement and the completion of a task is of equal worth.⁶ Here the practice of everyday toil with scarce resources has more in common with Alan O'Connor's reflections on co-founding a DiY punk space (in Toronto) rather than as opposed to the catch-all descriptors of punk in the 1970s. This is an issue for discussion within the following account of my research.

The second aim of the article is to raise issue with address the personal consequences arising out of undertaking fieldwork as a long-standing, insider member of DiY punk culture. The principal field method for examining this everyday DiY punk ethical activity the research was participant observation informed by critical insider ethnography.⁷ to examine everyday DiY punk ethical activity The research used field-journal, interview, and diary and club literature to critique populist accounts of DiY as one an endeavor requiring little effort. My work can be described as "action research" as the field was permanently changed by my presence and the contributions I made while present (O'Reilly, 2009:109-118).⁸ Through this process (and within the larger project from which this essay is culled), I also make critique of existing accounts of DiY were achieved by making my familiar world of DiY punk practice "anthropologically strange"; and Hammersley and Atkinson note this is an "an effort to make explicit presuppositions he or she takes for granted as a culture member."⁹ Nevertheless, my insider status made for a difficult methodological scenario in terms of potentially overlooking, during the course of field-work, the central mechanisms involved in the DiY process. However this 'combination of observation' method led me to

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make the general typologies of how and the ways in which DiY is undertaken operates within amidst immediate and external forces (-terms I return-explain to-below).

To explore this discussion further, analytical problems of field-data analysis were addressed by following Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory method.¹⁰ Such procedure involved engagement with Strauss and Corbin's model of the "conditional matrix,"¹¹ that framing how ethnographic accounts are written up by taking into account contextual inhibitors such as resources, events and consequences.¹¹ However, such accounts say little

of the general legacy of writing ethnography by an insider and this is an issue for further discussion. The philosophy of DiY involves the ethical commitment that one pursues their to pursuing one's goals; not for profit or individual gain; but, instead, for the benefit of the club and wider punk network, and to share music and information. The extension of this ethic during field-work ultimately meant that values were transposed and this, in turn, became of ethnographic interest. "Values refer to the human potential that is built into the unfolding of history", as Hammersley and Atkinson, point out.¹² The present research operated between the line of both my personal DiY values and the process of describing -yet also constructing, the field via daily activity and field note writing. There was thus a clash between my ethical standing as a participant and being a researcher involved in the completion of my doctorate and the development of my subsequent career development as a professor.

—The development of this position can be related to general scholarly anxiety debate regarding the status of ethnography as a neutral, descriptive tool. My contention is that neutrality is impossible and can only result in compromise. In theoretical terms, the partisan status of ethnographic writing has been historically and geopolitically located and discussed analysed in culturally relativist terms by Clifford.¹³ This discussion outlining the "predicament" of ethnography in terms of how, for example, the authority of ethnographic discourse (who speaks on behalf of whom?) evokes, sustains and constructs geographical power relations for example, is both accurate and salient in his much wider discussion of Said's (1978) account of the and the Western ethnographic representation of the Orient.¹⁴ In specific terms, I found that local power relations were obviously present in terms of the during my research; this which led to me being compromised tension between my status as both authentic participant status and an ethnographer in terms of both immediate scene relations and external contextual forces. As an insider I was in a privileged position in terms of observing activities, though when the data is narrativised through both academic methodology and language, the same power relations of 'who speaks' unavoidably enter the discussion.

-To theorise my place as an insider ethnographer, I described such relations in the research as 'immediate and external contextual fields of force'. Principally, the term field is used here in the ethnographic sense and not in the way Bourdieu's use-utilizes of the term, though some terminological crossover is possible.¹⁵ The descriptor, 'immediate' explains how general everyday practice in DiY culture is affected by access to resources and external other factors in terms of that have consequences that affect on the steering of everyday tasks, for example the Bradford riots. Yet this is equally bound by relevant are external (not directly relative to the field) issues (not directly relative to the field) which affect the subjective ethical status of the ethnographer both during and after the research (-in terms of writing, following doctoral degree protocol, and engaging in the publishing process/practice of publishing) for a long time after the completion of the ethnographic work. In short, I felt the pressure of dual-role existence caught up between the interplay of two contextual 'fields of force' that ultimately presented problems to which I will return discuss in the conclusion.

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Therefore, in order to discuss ~~my~~ these two central points—the crystallisation of DiY in everyday political punk practice, and the tensions of being a punk engaged in an ethnography of punk culture—the article will proceed through five sections. Firstly, ~~there is some~~ discussion of the long-term germination of DiY into ~~the~~ a political framework of anarcho punk, its eventual reproduction via the case study of ~~building a recording~~ studio 1in12, and how I came to be involved in this project as a doctoral researcher. Secondly, I ~~will~~ examine how the recording studio project was steered by ~~an~~ immediate contextual field of force ~~having that had~~ consequences ~~that affected on~~ the completion of ~~the~~ task. The third section ~~will~~ considers how the immediate political context of the chosen club for the research—the 1in12 Club—was strikingly illustrated during the riots in Bradford, and ~~how~~ the latter equally shaped the outcome of the studio project. I then turn in the fourth section to the issue of DiY legacy and ~~demonstrate~~ I then discuss ~~how some of the ways~~ the completed ‘Studio 1in12’ ~~both instilled feelings of success and triumph in those involved in its construction and also how it~~ became a valuable cultural resource for ~~both local punks and~~ the global punk scene in ~~terms of recording which their~~ records ~~with a global distribution are distributed.~~ (O’Connor, 2008). Finally, the ~~consequences of personal ethnographic study and the predicament of the latter within the external context of ethnographic research on my identity as a long term participant of UK punk culture will frame the conclusion in terms of speaks to the predicament and the~~ consequences of undertaking insider ethnography and action research fieldwork.

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‘Di why?’ Thirty Years of Struggle and Elbow Grease

Declaration of the emerging DiY punk ethic was first set out in the fanzine *Sideburns* in 1976: “This is a chord, this is another, this is a third, now form a band!” (Savage, 1991: 281). Such statements were expressions of rebellious UK punk cultural sensibility in keeping with grassroots alienation and frustration at thwarted creative energy. DiY rendered ~~visible the hidden process of major label musical production and in the keep of major labels openly to scrutinized~~ and portrayed this as readily available to those ~~practices that~~ previously barred people from such ~~business opportunities, whether because of either through~~ talent or resources. Gray (2004) glibly summarised the early punk spirit of DiY: “If you’re bored, do something about it; if you don’t like the way things are done, act to change them, be creative, be positive, anyone can do it.”¹⁶

The inclusive sensibility of the politically charged punk culture was a sure-fire answer to this problem and opened up new spaces for rebellion and resistance to mainstream culture, theorised by Bey as “~~the~~ ‘I’-Temporary Autonomous Zones.”¹⁷ By the early 1980s, DiY was taken onboard by a groundswell of leftist musicians, artists, writers and political activists that functioned as an informal ethical code of practice, a radically different yet oddly similar extension of previously existing countercultural ethics of the 1960s British counterculture; for example free-festivals, squatting and the underground press, sections of which represent the historical antecedents to the present global punk network referred to by O’Connor, (2008), following Bourdieu (1984,1993) as a ‘field’. Influences from this period fed into DiY punk as a continuation of radical politics (see McKay, 1998:1-53).

A plethora of DiY UK bands, scenes and records crept onto the cultural landscape sending clear messages to the music business that youth did not require the patronising ‘assistance’ of record companies, ~~nor~~ the rock ‘star system’ or the ‘music’ press. Instead, they could release ~~their own~~ records and book shows in spaces ~~they~~ built ~~by themselves (for example, in squatted buildings)~~ and in ~~spaces-venues~~ they controlled. Furthermore they

could ~~write~~ publish their music reviews and cultural commentary in their own version of the music press; the fanzine.¹⁸

In spite of this expansion, elements of the 1970s DiY ethic proved to be weak in the face of the music industry and many punk bands did sign to record labels with the accompanying peer accusations of selling out. Towards 1980, with the rise of the independent labels and 'post punk' music, punk itself was proclaimed (by the music and popular presses) as 'dead'. ~~Such populist narratives have been repeatedly employed as a 'rhetorical commonplace' (Billig, 1992).~~ These discourses of the death of punk, which were repeatedly employed as a "rhetorical commonplace," retain resulted in a populist hegemony that totally ignored how the DiY ethic remained active not only within the UK but also across commensurate global punk scenes.¹⁹ Overall, the 'punk is dead' thesis eclipsed the subsequent DiY activity prevalent over the next thirty odd years: hence this is an account that serves as an insider academic communiqué from the UK DiY underground.

DiY punk ~~represents is~~ an example of ~~continued how~~ participants can control ~~of~~ spheres of musical and political activity both within, inside and external to spaces and outside of, institutions originally geared toward mass production and the ~~appropriation accumulation~~ of profit. Rather than surrendering artistic and aesthetic control to record companies, booking agents and advertisers ~~with vested and occasionally unethical interests~~, DiY punk sought to ~~control cultivate this a~~ non-profit space.²⁰ Kuhn summarises DiY as:

~~"A~~ principle of independence and of retaining control over one's work, DiY (abbreviating *Do it Yourself*) defines original hardcore punk ethics -and, to many, remains the decisive criterion for ~~"true"~~ hardcore punk; the most tangible aspects of hardcore's DiY culture are self-run record labels, self organised shows, self made zines, and non-commercial social networks."²¹

In ethical terms, DiY is portrayed ~~in terms of as~~ being and remaining authentic. The ethical imperative of authenticity has directly informed DiY punk values and practices over the last thirty years; the 1in12 Club is a clear example of the continuation of this cultural tradition.

Anok4U2 Lad! Anarcho Punk and West Yorkshire Legacies

For the lay reader not familiar with the confusing ~~differences between the legions of taxonomy of~~ punk ~~genres/factions~~, anarcho punk was ~~clear example of the above both a~~ continuation of the counterculture of the 1960s. ~~Anarcho punk and a musical genre/scene that~~ amplified the populist embrace of DiY punk by turning it into a political project. ~~Roughly, At~~ its height in the UK between 1978-84, anarcho punk was more or less spearheaded by the band Crass, ~~which had with~~ its own DiY label (~~Crass Records~~); ~~that which~~ became the blueprint for, ~~to date eventually~~, thousands of other DiY record labels (O'Connor, 2008). During the early 1980s there were hundreds of bands (with mostly unemployed band members) squatting buildings and playing in community centres, making anti-war and pro animal-rights political statements, and ~~totally without the support / and~~ financial assistance of major record labels. Anarcho punk was, by default, fundamentally disinterested in profit, privileging the political musical message over self-interest (Ogg, 2009).²² Broadly, anarcho punk took the threat of cold-war nuclear annihilation seriously and took aim at both nuclear proliferation and the policies that emerged from the cold war and the 'cosy' relationship between Conservative UK Prime Minister Thatcher and Republican US President Reagan to be a precarious threat to life on the planet with western states insistence on nuclear weapons proliferation. ~~The~~ involvement in the reinvigoration of CND, anti war protests and general campaigns of direct-action were central to the

development of anarcho-punk from 1978 onwards and constituted a significant practical political turn in punk culture that forms the historical backdrop ~~for~~ the present article.

~~——— Rimbaud, the drummer for Crass, spoke of the ethical catalyst that was to later be formed into that band: ‘When [Johnny] Rotten [of the Sex Pistols] proclaimed that there was ‘no future,’ we saw it as a challenge to our creativity—we knew there was a future if we were prepared to work for it’ (Rimbaud, 1984: 62, italics mine).~~

While the political actions and music releases of Crass are too wide ranging to document here, their subsequent influence acted as an inspiration for punks to create their own political spaces through squatting and ~~the creation of~~ non-commercial ~~venues~~space.²³ By the early 1980s, Crass clearly established themselves as the centrepiece of ~~the~~ anarcho punk in the UK, with its roots firmly set in an uncompromising reading of the core ethics of DiY punk. ~~Penny Rimbaud, the drummer for Crass, spoke of the ethical catalyst for his band: ‘When [Johnny] Rotten [of the Sex Pistols] proclaimed that there was ‘no future,’ we saw it as a challenge to our creativity—we knew there was a future if we were prepared to work for it’ (Rimbaud, 1984: 62, italics mine).~~ The ‘anyone can do it’ ethos led to inspired ‘spin-off’ projects that both cemented networks and created political links, reinforcing anarcho networks across the globe. The grass-roots political example ~~that~~ Crass pioneered in their ~~early, groundbreaking early record releases, marked with ‘pay no more than’ stamped on their covers,~~ sparked an ethical ~~effect shift~~ that came to fruition ~~in through~~ the ~~large~~ number of political punk bands that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s ~~and continue to this day~~. It is ~~here in this DiY milieu~~ that I make ~~my~~the ethnographic entrance some twenty-one years later, ~~into that DiY legacy with the introduction of the~~through fieldwork undertaken during 2001 at the UK-1in12 Club: ~~in Bradford,~~ a self managed venue ~~in Bradford~~ that ~~practically~~embraces DiY ethics ~~and reflects as a legacy of~~ the anarcho punk politics of its members, ~~past and present~~.

The One In Twelve Club

The inception of the 1in12 club—named after the Conservative Governments’ Rainer report (1980) which stated that one in twelve unemployed claimants in West Yorkshire were committing some kind of fraud on the benefit system—is a ~~major prime~~ example of ~~both~~ a British anarchist social club and ~~an example of~~ the continuation of anarcho punk politics beyond the 1980s-. This group of collectively-organised volunteers banded together in the face of Thatcherist attacks on trade unions, the working classes and the unemployed, to represent a continued legacy that linked DiY punk and anarchist principles as the cornerstone of their actions. Prior to the club obtaining a building through a grant in 1988, punk gigs were held twice weekly in various Bradford pub locations from 1981 onwards and this formed ~~some of~~ the bedrock of fundraising activities which the club would draw upon over the next twenty years.

The twice weekly gigs held in several city centre pubs provided the embodiment of the 1in12 “way”, providing gigs that were cheap, free from sexist, racist and statist hassles, the usual promoters and rip-offs, dress restrictions and bouncer intimidation. The objective was to create a lively and participative social scene, to stimulate a culture of resistance a space under which the control and direction of the membership for entertainment, debate and solidarity.²⁴

During the 1980s the club attracted membership and ~~visitors~~ from those involved in the anarcho-punk scene. Anarcho-punks had attempted on numerous occasions to set up a club in the UK. Taylor, a club member, spoke during ~~my~~our interview ~~with him of~~ ~~the~~about collectively run ~~spaces in the~~ 1980s: ~~the~~ ‘Station Club’ in Gateshead, Sunderland’s

'Bunker' venue and 'the Pad' run by the Scottish, Crass-inspired band, The Alternative. Most importantly, in 1980, a Crass project helped to fund a London anarchist centre, 'Centro Iberico', through the proceeds from the split-single benefit record with the Poison Girls, 'Bloody Revolutions/Persons' Unknown'. However after Crass decided to have nothing to do with the centre following the donation of £12,000 in order to avoid accusations of being 'leaders' of the scene, the Anarchy Centre collapsed. Rimbaud commented:

Based in London's Docklands, the centre was open for a year or so before collapsing in disarray. From the start, conflict arose between the older generation of anarchists and the new generation of anarcho punks. It seemed that the only common interest, and that only tenuously, was Crass, but true to our agreement we kept our distance. We did however play one gig there before the inter-camp bitching left me wondering if the thing hadn't been a dreadful mistake.²⁵

~~Unlike the short-lived Docklands project, 1in12 successfully avoided closure for thirty-odd years. Where the 1in12 differed from the above venture, in spite of manifesting similar 'inter-camp' divisions and splits to the Docklands project, is that it successfully avoided closure for thirty-odd years. As the guide to the 1in12 explains, previous club divisions have created serious problems:~~

At no stage in the Club's history has the relationship between "ideal" and "reality" ever been straightforward. Indeed conflict over whose ideals and which reality has often thrown the Club into deep internal conflict. The diversity of interests, priorities and expectations of the membership, empowered by the open and active process of decision making, has often come at a price. Sometimes members have left, disillusioned and occasionally bitter, but this is the uncomfortable reality of taking responsibility and control.²⁶

~~Scarce resources (financial, volunteer and practical skills) are central to the immediate contextual field of force which can either advance DiY projects to completion or result in conflict.~~

The fieldwork detailed in this article was concerned with how the club maintained its DiY activities in the face of ~~such problems, as well as~~ fluctuating membership numbers and a scarcity of resources. ~~Scarce resources (financial, volunteer and practical skills) are central to the immediate contextual field of force which can either advance DiY projects to completion or result in conflict.~~ Entrance was secured via my previous contact with the 1in 12 Club and involved daily contact and observation; although, due to the number of opportunities for observation, I also attended DiY punk gigs in nearby Leeds during most evenings as these were more frequent than the occasional gigs held at the 1in12.

Punk Ethnography

On arrival at the 1in12 at a matinee gig on a rainy Sunday in early June, 2001, I was informed by Peter, my central 'gatekeeper', ~~of my that I would be involved~~ ~~ment with-in~~ the construction of a recording studio in the basement of the club, in addition to helping out with other tasks. The club functions under the umbrella of a number of collectives: the peasants (food growing), games, library, gig, drama, and studio collectives. Operational logistics of the club were monitored through membership meetings each Sunday where forthcoming events and day-to-day issues were collectively discussed; ~~at one such meeting, -I~~ presented the research ~~here~~ to outline my project. It was announced that my colleague in the building of the studio was to be John, a caretaker who would offer assistance when time allowed²⁷.

The general ethic of DiY, self management and collective mutual-aid, is at the heart of the 1in12 club and is the reason why DiY punk has become a stable method of fundraising. A consequence of involvement in punk DiY activity is the development of individual and group autonomy, control and empowerment within the immediate field of force. There is a broad resentment to anything considered ~~to be either~~ mainstream, capitalist or corporate in ~~its~~ scope, ~~and these sentiments informed~~. This provided the not-for profit rationale for building the studio. ~~More specifically, which was as follows: the wider~~ control of recording and practice ~~rooms-spaces is typically dictated~~ by private interest ~~which~~ results in the majority of DiY musical ~~projects-acts~~ paying inflated ~~practice and recording studio~~ costs; this, ~~in turn~~, surrenders control and recording quality to such interests, ~~it~~ impoverishing band members and labels, ~~and present~~ putting added financial pressure on ~~any given~~ such projects. Thus, the chief aim of building a recording studio in the Celub was primarily to develop collective, not-for-profit recording/-studio skills and enable bands to record at an affordable price. A further, overarching reason was to provide an authentic alternative to mainstream studios where band members are disconnected from the processes of recording their music and ~~learning~~ such skills ~~is~~ are off-limits to the 'customer': ~~the recording studio would extend the DiY ethic beyond its existing remit of concert promotion, record label distribution and bands.~~ The project had already been partially realised through the construction of a practice room, from 1998-2000, which resulted in a cheap-to-rent, secure, soundproofed practice space and storage area for bands in the basement of the club ~~the actual studio was earmarked for construction in an old storeroom, adjacent to the practice space.~~ The recording studio extended the DiY ethic beyond its existing remit of ~~concert promotion, record label distribution and bands.~~ It was earmarked for construction ~~next to the practice room in an old storeroom.~~

—In spite of my initial enthusiasm, I encountered frustration from day one. Audiences and general punters are rarely seen outside of ~~the~~ Club events which lead to a general and consistent decline in ~~both~~ club volunteers and workers' morale. ~~The~~ immediate lack of volunteers and ~~the~~ paid ground-staff of ~~only~~ two meant that I became isolated during the initial stages of the project; ~~p-with~~ personal initiative and ~~a sense of~~ autonomy become ~~my~~ key allies. For example, when I arrived at the club on the first day of studio fieldwork, I expected to be told what to do. ~~While given prior notice. Aside from previous advice~~ that I would be involved in the studio, I ~~soon~~ found it was ~~entirely~~ down-up to me to get the project moving. Aware that there were three other members of the studio collective, Dave, John and Anthony, I suggested a meeting to formulate a ~~work plan-of~~ work.²⁸ However, as John was tied up in the running/cleaning of the Club, and Anthony had a full-time job and numerous other Celub demands, it was obvious I needed to recruit help to take the project forward. But this was ~~not before I had~~ after a number of attempts at kick starting the project on my own.

The lack of volunteers and staff meant it became virtually impossible, at times, to remain focussed on any ~~one~~ specific activity. Hence the early days at the club were *not entirely* involved with work on the studio project. Instead, I laminated membership-cards, cleaned the café, mopped toilets, washed dishes, and assisted with general tasks, ~~that all~~ underlying the demands of everyday DiY activity. It is these activities that are the cornerstone of daily survival and ~~the~~ reproduction of the Club. Daily, thankless requirements of ~~the club~~ volunteers allow the Club ~~ensure its survival~~ to prepare for the demands of ~~the~~ large events and gigs, ~~staged there~~ in addition to ~~facilitating~~ its functioning as a daily social hub for its

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three hundred strong membership. Anthony's ~~exemplified in a~~ diary entry reveals his frustrations at being drawn into such tasks ~~at the club~~:

Saturday 21st Aug 2001

Drop in early at the club to take pastry out of the freezer to thaw, draw some funds from the PA collective (I'd paid for some cable and connectors in April with my credit card)—I need to pay for the truck parts I'm about to collect. As I'm leaving, the brewery arrives with a beer delivery. No one else is around so I have to take care of it; as they finish, the bar-steward arrives. They're early, or he's late. But the job got done anyhow in a spirit of no panic solidarity. Or something.

Similarly to Anthony, I became drawn into essential tasks in the club and when it came to the studio had to either request assistance, or become motivated enough to begin the task myself.

———John showed me what the initial tasks of the studio project were. He said I should begin with hanging a door to allow the storeroom to be separated from the main control room. I had no previous experience of undertaking such activity and John was soon called away to another task in the club. I wrote the following in the field-journal once work had stopped because of a defective drill ~~after and~~ my fruitless attempts to fix it ~~became fruitless~~:

18/06/01. John arrived back at the club and managed to get the drill going. The problem was solved by 'banging' the drill on the studio wall. This was not something I was comfortable with due to the danger of this practice, but after a few 'knocks' the drill appeared to behave itself, though not for long: the work stopped again.

The following week was equally frustrating: at every turn ~~of in~~ building the studio I found myself either distracted ~~into~~ other tasks or struggling to ~~achieve the complete~~ tasks due to ~~through~~ my lack of practical DiY skills. The sense of frustration began to swell and the feeling that I was somehow 'missing' out on the 'real' club activity and that self-observation was pointless: participation was inhibiting observation.

What was apparent was that I would have to make things happen *myself* in order to make any progress. Through my insider status in both the Bradford and Leeds DiY punk scenes I recruited two new studio collective volunteers, who ~~volunteered~~ agreed to work for nothing. The first was one of the Club sound engineers, Blakey, who had helped construct the Club when the building was purchased and also had long-standing involvement with DiY music. He was a student of sound engineering at a local university and was thus able to use this experience during the summer to expand our knowledge of studio construction. He was ethically clear about why he joined in with the studio project:

It will be a good space ~~[...] and I mean the practice room's good enough.~~ I mean it will be a way, hopefully, of giving people skills. I do hope people will be able to get in there and be able to learn the stuff and make mistakes and gain another rung in the ladder of production. It will make money for the club, hopefully. Use the space that's there, which is what the fucking building is for.

The second recruit, Scotty, was a club member who ~~was~~ lived at the Leeds squat-venue known as the '120Rats'. He had been involved in renovating ~~ion of~~ that building from a run-down hovel into a functioning venue. Overhearing Scotty overheard me voicing my frustration about the studio project speaking in the Club café, regarding the studio project, Scotty and he volunteered his services. John's rReaction to Scotty's input was recorded in a ~~reply to John in our~~ interview:

~~It was totally by fluke.~~ I had no idea how skilled Scotty was going to be involved: he was just sat in the cafe one day and I was moaning. I was sat there going ‘fucking hell, I have got to go down that fucking room and sit there. I can’t lift stuff and get stuff right.’ Then Scotty during one lunchtime said ‘I’ll come and give you a hand’.

The project then progressed rapidly through the use of the immediate contextual punk scene resources (the field of force). The majority of the tools were ~~at various levels of~~ of varying quality and were scattered throughout the building. As I noted above the drill was the first stumbling point. Blakey, in reaction to this sad state of affairs, supplied his own drill. The band Chumbawamba donated £500 for the studio project gleaned from their royalties for the popular song ‘Tubthumping’, which they had allowed to be used ~~for in~~ a car advert. Cocktail nights ~~were~~ organised by by the Celub, ~~raising~~ £100; in addition, 1 in 12 benefit gigs ~~that~~ produced equal amounts of project money. Finally, one of the central self-generating funding methods was the hourly-rate charged to bands using the practice room; ~~ring fenced into the development of the studio project.~~ So, from various donations to the studio-project (from benefits etc), we now had a small amount of money to purchase tools and these were procured at various stages during the project construction. The project also had existing funds for essential building materials ~~which that~~ came from sources within the immediate DiY punk network.

Nazis and the Burning of Rome

As the project headed construction advanced towards the conclusion of my fieldwork, the immediate field of force both inhibited and advanced the project during an alarming event. The project was active Work was ongoing during the day of the Bradford riots of July 7th 2001, when the BNP attempted to march through Bradford and met with stiff opposition from anti-fascist groups and local protestors.²⁹ On the Saturday of the riots, the club was a staging post for ~~the~~ Leeds Anti-Fascist Action and the café was open and very busy. Club security was doubled, with members and volunteers also looking out of posted on the top floor in order to at scope out potential visitors before permitting them entrance via the door buzzer system. Studio collective members agreed to be present at the club due to Internet threats from the BNP, posted on to the Celub website. Upo On my arrival that day, I discovered that there had been an attempt to set fire to the club by pouring engine oil on one of the exterior walls and igniting it. ~~Anthony was explicit here:~~ in a way the people that are targeting us, cause they have got a long standing grudge, that in a way, helps us, because the damage that was actually done the other day in the riots was done by people in a momentary heat, nutters, or rioters, craziness which gave them enough energy to actually resist and also they were in a mob so they had that mob mentality, that they gave each others permission, whereas the people that came down here, like when you are in a mob you don't think anything bad's going to happen to you whereas people aren't afraid they are gonna get caught.

The atmosphere in the club that day was tense in light of both the failed arson attack and the riots. Club members were in and out of the building, returning with occasional reports of events during the run-up to the riots. Whilst this was happening, work on the studio proceeded as usual. The contrast with the project’s previous work was the number of people who volunteered with four newcomers assisting to complete a section of the work. The audible backdrop to that day’s project was the sound of police helicopters, breaking glass and sirens. John commented that we were “building a studio whilst Rome burned.”

Overall, the riots ironically aided the studio project’s progression, though fear was very much evident in the general atmosphere that day. Specifically,

Although the Club remained ~~was~~ inspirational to newcomers who learned of its activities; ~~the daily regime of the club had been eclipsed~~ Here John was explicit:

Here you can ask somebody what their favorite twenty albums are. Half of them are really recent ones because they are the ones they remember the best. I mean the most recent thing was just the day of the riots because, loads of people came in. People had come from London to resist the NF and were going “Ooohh, this place is great.” I imagined I was in a First-World War soup kitchen, on this sort of wagon, a few hundred yards away from the front, ‘cause people kept coming in talking about what was going on and then having their burger and going out again. Mobile phones were ringing and stuff and I was just, like, serving food which is, sort of like, kind of mundane really, but it was obvious that they needed to be fed and they did think that the place was great.

Overall, the riots ironically aided the studio project’s progression, though fear was very much evident in the general atmosphere that ~~What it also summarised~~ one can also observe here was the intersection of mutual-aid with the immediate fields of force, as the DiY community played out with and club members banded ed together in the face of a threat to the club, as much both to build the studio as and to protect the building from potential attack.

Outcomes and Postscript

My research observation at the club was completed by August, 2001. Scotty and Blakey focused their attention elsewhere and the project stalled. Without ~~myself and~~ the volunteers and I, interest waned ~~before being taken again by~~ until Anthony and other Club members picked things up later that year. That the studio project ground to halt for this time is ~~testimony evidence~~ of the way the Club functions within the immediate field of force. Uneven access to resources, both financial and human, made for a slow conclusion to the project. ~~However, But~~ eventually, studio equipment was installed in 2002 and two years later in 2004, the studio project was up and running with a number of bands successfully recording ~~there~~. ~~These have~~ material that has since been released on DiY labels ~~as on~~ vinyl, CDs or free downloads and that all stand as a testimony to the mutual efforts of ~~all those~~ everyone involved. I returned there to record three 12-inch records with my band during 2006-8, and the recordings were done at a fraction of the cost of any commercial studio. At the time of writing, As of mid-2011, ‘Studio1in12’ (as it is now known) is exceedingly busy, and I returned to record three 12” records with my band during 2006-8 ~~has~~. This recording was achieved at a fraction of the cost of any commercial studio with over twenty recorded albums ~~being recorded to its credit~~.

~~Importantly, throughout~~ Though the process of the building ~~of the~~ studio stirred the feelings of frustration at the lack of progress, it is important to note that they were counterbalanced with feelings of determination, success, fulfilment and satisfaction.

However, this sense of achievement was not shared equally ~~shared~~ by all ~~members~~. Here John is candid ~~about this~~:

I haven’t got the same sense of achievement building the studio as I had building the practice room because it is like having your second kid or something. It’s like you have done it once. Obviously it’s exciting but it’s not the first time it’s happened and I think when I actually hear a recording ~~out of it that is when~~ [...] it will hit me the most ~~like~~.

Whilst John notes the lack of feeling fulfilled, he was enthusiastic that the freedom and about the potential exists in for the Club to achieve things that were deemed previously impossible:

That sense that you can do what you want, really. Sort of freedom, within reason, you know. It's like today we can just go, "Alright. We are going to build a recording studio."

The Club provides spaces to achieve such goals and represents just one example amongst a multitude of DiY projects globally that are a practical applications of the continuing legacy of DiY punk ethics. Projects are gradually accomplished if one is prepared to persevere within the demanding, immediate contextual field of force. But of equal importance in this case was, successful accomplishment allows the sharing of new skills between Club members. The DiY ethic had been practically extended, though this was certainly not an easy undertaking. Club members and members of participants in the UK punk scene could now record cheaply and effectively, though this was certainly not an easy undertaking. The sense of significance this project represented in terms of extending DiY cultural production had been shifted from merely releasing and distributing records independently on a self-run label, having it distributed and reviewed in fanzines, to taking the physical control of the recording process itself. This was unprecedented in the English DiY scene. Taylor's comments are accurate in respect of these reflect the more local effect of this success:

I think the practice room and the studio have definitely improved the club. I am really looking forward to when our band can record in the studio that has been built by friends. I mean, that is everything that I am about with the band and it was like if we could just have that part of it [...]. If we could have just pressed the fucker [the record] there it would have been even better. But I mean that's one amazing, inspiring growth thing. So those things are really good.

The frustrations of the project also serve to illuminate how DiY day-to-day practices and operate within an immediate field of force. The constant reproductive tasks central to the survival of the Club mean that there is high turnover of volunteers, a perennial scarcity of resources and a lack of motivation, especially as the completion of essential daily-tasks distract and remove members from achieving goals swiftly. This factor of 'struggle' as the above quotation illustrated leads to member burnout. That said, the extra revenue the studio and practice room now brings in provides a welcomed addition to the skeleton funding of the club. Indeed, my November 2006 recording session witnessed a collapse of the Club's sewage pipe on the front of the Club from strong winds and our studio fees paid directly for its repair (Dave also donated his fee to the Club). Whilst such acts are largely *ad hoc*, and operate under the anarcho syndicalist badge of mutual aid and 'by all means necessary', the feelings of achievement (however sporadic), occur together with that spring from the successful completion of a DiY project and are chief motivational factors of the DiY punk scene.

Ethnography and Context

So what of the external, contextual field of force? In this case, it is a balance between the requirements of the academy (and the generations of scholarship and research), against the ethical context of the culture, and the participant status of the researcher. There are three dilemmas evident as a consequence of undertaking participant observation of one's own culture. I offer a short discussion of these by way of a conclusion.

First, in terms of undertaking the ethnography there was a conflict of interest in terms of regarding my use of a University scholarship (public money) to undertake conduct research work, this was public money. Whilst the other club-members were toiling wage-free in that studio, I was in receipt of a generous University research grant and, thus partially

removed from the pressures of daily survival. As a club member and long-time scene participant, of long-standing this had raised ethical issues for me—ones that have left a prolonged sense of guilt. Was I gaining, career-wise, from this undertaking, or was the club gaining from free labour power? Secondly, the fact that my long-term career fortunes prospects were secured off the back of research secured via my research on the DiY punk scene, has left me feeling ethically uneasy regarding about the work. Have I indeed used this whole process as a career stepping-stone and potentially lost my scene credibility/authenticity as a result? My immediate reaction to this question is “No,” yet I also find it very difficult to now turn off my ‘ethnographic imagination’ when participating in DiY activity: this is the an occasional source of mental discomfort and unease/anxiety (for detailed discussion of this issue see Willis, 2000).³⁰ Consequences of fieldwork have had a profound effect on my way of ‘seeing’ both my daily existence and my standing within the punk scene. Somewhat uncomfortably, and led to unease where I cannot easily switch off the role of fieldworker in non-research social situations. Thirdly, in terms of the external context alluded to above, the narrativisation of club members into an academic discourse to which they are not privy too, leaves me with an equal feeling of unease. Transferring the daily struggle of DiY daily practice into academic concerns and debates places me in the precarious position of both a participant and a commentator with reflexive positions of control in terms of the powers of representation. With the institutional connections and financial support of my field work have I indeed, and ironically, ‘sold out’? This is a serious question that has had a long-standing impact upon both my sense of self and my standing in a scene based upon equality. To wit, I am now, post-viva, frequently referred to (by some of those involved in the research) as “Dr. Punk”; a rather patronising, yet equally disciplinary term.

Indeed, this situation is These personal dilemmas, or ones like them, seem unavoidable if one is to generate authentic data though by undertaking such research and an unfortunate consequence of fieldwork in one’s own ‘backyard’. These dilemmas can be hypothetically, and broadly countered as follows. One such solution to avoiding such feelings was to would be to employ a participant with no previous insider-experience in of punk culture to undertake the field-research on my behalf. The researcher could enter the field a ‘stranger’ and remain much closer to the external, contextual academic field than the community under observation. Both financially and practically, this is unrealistic this is an unlikely event. Yet to pursue this line, it occurs where the researcher enters the field a ‘stranger’ and remains much closer to the external, contextual academic field, than the community under observation. But more to the point, what the potential consequence is that the research effectively then loses some capacity to authentically describe and offer detailed and familiar typology of the DiY punk scene. So as one gains in critical distance is achieved so too is one loses in detail and the opportunity to offer an authentic description of the DiY punk scene is then lost. Generally then, the solution to this dilemma is the one I applied/employed: to suffer an uneasy trade-off in which, on the one hand, my between the consequences of ethical integrity as a compromise between these two positions where the researcher and the authenticity of the research were both preserved, but at the same time, field/data is struck: one where the uncomfortable personal consequences of the research were accepted, a situation where I retained, in spite of my leaving me uneasy about both my status as both an academic; and also one of a long-standing time participant in the DiY punk scene.

In the present article I have illustrated that attempting to strike this critical/balance between these two poles functions as the difficult, yet ideal situation and the aim of the

present article, though not without the sowing of personal dilemmas. So (Herein lies here rests the unresolved debate for the time being and these positions can certainly be read as evidence of the “ethnographic predicaments,” previously identified by Clifford, that stem from (1988). These are then earmarked in terms of the impossible, unavoidable, perennial status of the practice of ethnographic researching data from one’s own culture.³¹ Ethnographic writing produced within the immediate and external contextual fields of force is hitherto *always* a careful balance between these two methodological platforms. To write from outside this ‘predicament’ without some change of subjectivity of the participant is an unavoidable and enduring issue always already reflexively related to the ethnographic method. When undertaking Engaging in participant observation of a culture in which one has previous, long-standing links and commitments with such dilemmas of authenticity will often raise a range host of potential problems related to both professional and personal integrity—some of which with have occasional long-term residual consequences.

Notes

¹ see McKay 1996, 1998; Edge, 2004; Berger 2006

² see Ogg, 2009:iii).

³ Negus, 1992

⁴ This is one aspect of DiY culture that has transferable potential for any researcher seeking to examine this ethical legacy in commensurate fields, for example hip-hop or political activism.

⁵ de Certeau 1984: 176; Jenkins: 1992:24; Bennett, 2009

⁶ see also O’Connor, 2002a

⁷ O’Reilly, 2009: 51-6).

⁸ O’Reilly, 2009 109-118)

⁹ Hammersley and Atkinson 2006: 9

¹⁰ Glaser and Strauss (1968)

¹¹ Strauss and Corbin, 1990 158-175. The conditional matrix is a component of Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory data analysis technique. It is principally used to factor wider intervening factor in ethnographic writing and was used in the present research as a tool to incorporate wider cultural intervening factors such as the Bradford riots. The Conditional Matrix is described by the authors as ‘an analytic aid, a diagram, useful for considering the wide range of conditions and consequences related to the phenomenon under study. The matrix enables the analyst to both distinguish and link levels of condition and consequences (1990:158)/

¹² “Values refer to the human potential that is built into the unfolding of history,” as noted by Hammersley and Atkinson, Hammersley and Atkinson (2006: 15).

¹³ Clifford (1988

¹⁴ Said, 1978.

¹⁵ (Bourdieu’s (1993; see for example O’Connor, 2008)

¹⁶ Gray, 2001, p.153.

¹⁷ Bey, 1991: 1

¹⁸ See, Nelson, 1989; Duncombe, 1998; Downing 2001; Atton, 2002.

¹⁹ Billig, 1992.

²⁰ (Golding and Murdock 1991

²¹ Kuhn, 2010: 15.

²² Ogg, 2009 produced a robust study of the history and legacy of the UK independent record label. Whilst anarcho punk and its legion of subsequent project bare similarities to these production houses, there is a fundamental difference worthy of note. Broadly independent labels still operate within the confines of the profit motive and equally within the organisation frameworks of major labels. By contrast, anarcho punk and DiY record labels operate within the schema of complete control of the space of cultural production, thus keeping to an absolute minimum contact and engagement with major label or capitalist music institutions.

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²³ See Rimbaud, 1996; McKay 1996; Glasper, 2006, 2008; Berger, 2006; Ogg, 2009; Robb 2006; Daily, 2009).

²⁴ *What is the lin12 Club?* 1995.

²⁵ Rimbaud, 1998:124).

²⁶ lin12 Guide, Op.cit:3.

²⁷ All participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms in respect of their ethical anonymity. For a complete discussion of the recent layout of the US DiY label system and associate field, see O'Connor (2009).

²⁸ All participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms in respect of their ethical anonymity. For a complete discussion of the recent layout of the US DiY label system and associate field, see O'Connor (2009).

²⁹ The Bradford Riots ended with the Manningham area of Bradford in flames, millions of pounds damage caused (including a car showroom and the Labour club were firebombed with both white and Asian businesses finding themselves under attack from over a thousand Asian youths disgusted at the proposed march of the BNP through Bradford. Over 500 people were injured with 83 premises and 23 businesses were damaged at an estimated cost of £7.5m. (Source: bbc.co.uk 15/10/07).

³⁰ for detailed discussion of this issue see Willis, 2000.

³¹ See Clifford, 1988.

